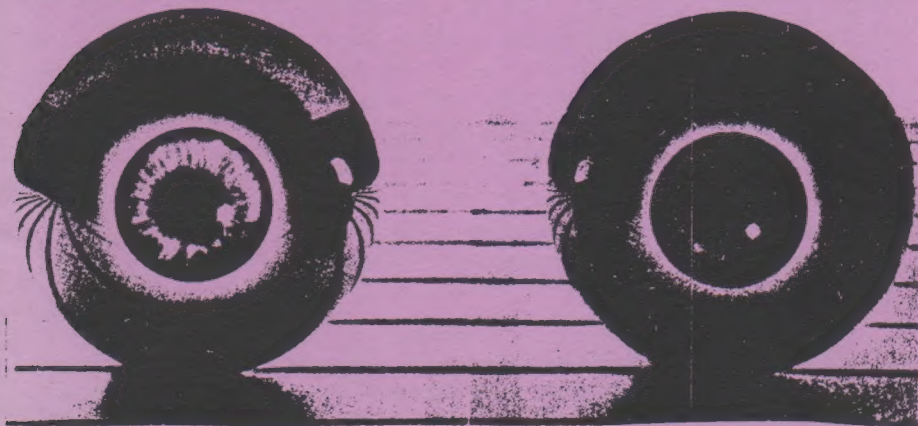


kronstadt diary

alexander berkman



seattle sraf pamphlet no. 3

SEATTLE SRAF PAMPHLETS

Seattle SRAF pamphlets are a publishing project jointly undertaken by members of the Seattle section of the Social-Revolutionary Anarchist Federation and the Revolutionary Anarchist Print Project.

We have undertaken to produce and reproduce writings of both an historical and contemporary nature which we feel casts a better light on the age-old problem of creating a truly liberatory revolution.

Alexander Berkman's Kronstadt Diary is just one of these efforts. The Kronstadt rebellion, to our mind, is an incident of immeasurable import for the serious revolutionary, and we have listed a short bibliography at the back of this pamphlet to aid those who care to pursue the lessons of Kronstadt.

The Revolutionary Anarchist Print Project is a permanently revolving printing fund set up in Seattle in 1972. Donations are always needed to help us with new publishing projects. All donations go into the print fund, and all of the money we receive from the sale of our pamphlets goes back into the fund and toward our rather ambitious goal of establishing a permanent anarchist publishing house here in Seattle.

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PETROGRAD, 1921

February 28—Strikers' proclamations have appeared on the streets today. They cite cases of workers found frozen to death in their homes. The main demand is for winter clothing and more regular issue of rations. Some of the circulars protest against the suppression of factory meetings. "The people want to take counsel together and find means of relief," they state. Zinoviev asserts the whole trouble is due to Menshevik and Social Revolutionist plotting.

For the first time a political turn is being given to the strikes. Late in the afternoon a proclamation was posted containing larger demands. "A complete change is necessary in the policies of the Government," it reads. "First of all, the workers and peasants need freedom. They don't want to live by the decrees of the Bolsheviks; they want to control their own destinies. We demand the liberation of all arrested socialists and non-partisan workingmen; abolition of martial law; freedom of speech, press, and assembly for all who labour; free election of shop and factory committees, of labour union and Soviet representatives."

March 1—Many arrests are taking place. Groups of strikers surrounded by Chekists, on their way to prison, are a common sight. Much indignation in the city. I hear that several unions have been liquidated and their active members turned over to the Cheka. But proclamations continue to appear. The arbitrary stand of the authorities is having the effect of rousing reactionary tendencies. The situation is growing tense. Calls for the *Utchredilka* (Constituent Assembly) are being heard. A manifesto is circulating, signed by the "Socialist Workers of the Nevsky District", openly attacking the Communist regime. "We know who is afraid of the Constituent Assembly," it declares. "It is they who will no longer be able to rob us. Instead they will have to answer before the representatives of the people for their deceit, their thefts, and all their crimes."

Zinoviev is alarmed; he has wired Moscow for troops. The local garrison is said to be in sympathy with the strikers. Military from the provinces has been ordered to the city: special Communist regiments have already arrived. Extraordinary martial law has been declared today.

March 2—Most disquieting reports. Large strikes have broken out in Moscow. In the Astoria I heard today that armed conflicts have taken place near the Kremlin and blood has been shed. The Bolsheviks claim the coincidence of events in the two capitals as proof of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy.

It is said that Kronstadt sailors have come to the city to look into the cause of trouble. Impossible to tell fact from fiction. The absence of a public press encourages the wildest rumours. The official papers are discredited.

March 3—Kronstadt is disturbed. It disapproves of the Government's drastic methods against the dissatisfied workers. The men of the warship *Petrovavlovsk* have passed a resolution of sympathy with the strikers.

It has become known today that on February 28 a committee of sailors was sent to this city to investigate the strike situation. Its report was unfavourable to the authorities. On March 1 the crews of the First and Second Squadrons of the Baltic Fleet called a public meeting at Yakorny Square. The gathering was attended by 16,000 sailors, Red Army men, and workers. The Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kronstadt Soviet, the communist Vassiliev, presided. The audience was addressed by Kalinin, President of the Republic, and by Kuzmin, Commissar of the Baltic Fleet. The attitude of the sailors was entirely friendly to the Soviet Government, and Kalinin was met on his arrival in Kronstadt with military honours, music, and banners.

At the meeting the Petrograd situation and the report of the sailors' investigating committee were discussed. The audience was outspoken in its indignation at the means employed by Zinoviev against the workers. President Kalinin and Commissar Kuzmin berated the strikers and denounced the *Petropavlovsk* Resolution as counter-revolutionary. The sailors emphasized their loyalty to the Soviet system, but condemned the Bolshevik bureaucracy. The resolution was passed.

March 4—Great nervous tension in the city. The strikes continue; labour disorders have again taken place in Moscow. A wave of discontent is sweeping the country. Peasant uprisings are reported from Tambov, Siberia, the Ukraine, and Caucasus. The country is on the verge of desperation. It was confidently hoped that with the end of civil war the Communists would mitigate the severe military regime. The Government had announced its intention of economic reconstruction, and the people were eager to co-operate. They looked forward to the lightening of the heavy burdens, the abolition of wartime restrictions, and the introduction of elemental liberties.

The fronts are liquidated, but the old policies continue, and labour militarization is paralyzing industrial revival. It is openly charged that the Communist Party is more interested in entrenching its political power than in saving the Revolution.

An official manifesto appeared today. It is signed by Lenin and Trotsky and declares Kronstadt guilty of mutiny (*myatezh*). The demand of the sailors for free Soviets is denounced as "a counter-revolutionary conspiracy against the proletarian Republic". Members of the Communist Party are ordered into the mills and factories to "rally the workers to the support of the Government against the traitors". Kronstadt is to be suppressed.

The Moscow radio station sent out a message addressed "to all, all, all":

Petrograd is orderly and quiet, and even the few factories where accusations against the Soviet Government were recently voiced now understand that it is the work of provocators. . . . Just at this moment, when in America a new Republican regime is assuming the reins of government and showing inclination to take up business relations with Soviet Russia, the spreading of lying rumours and the organization of disturbances in Kronstadt have the sole purpose of influencing the American President and chang-

ing his policy toward Russia. At the same time the London Conference is holding its sessions, and the spreading of similar rumours must influence also the Turkish delegation and make it more submissive to the demands of the Entente. The rebellion of the *Petropavlovsk* crew is undoubtedly part of a great conspiracy to create trouble within Soviet Russia and to injure our international position. . . . This plan is being carried out within Russia by a Czarist general and former officers, and their activities are supported by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists.

The whole Northern District is under martial law and all gatherings are interdicted. Elaborate precautions have been taken to protect the Government institutions. Machine guns are placed in the Astoria, the living quarters of Zinoviev and other prominent Bolsheviks. These preparations are increasing general nervousness. Official proclamations command the immediate return of the strikers to the factories, prohibit suspension of work, and warn the populace against congregating in the streets.

The Committee of Defence has initiated a "cleaning" of the city.

Many workers suspected of sympathizing with Kronstadt have been placed under arrest. All Petrograd sailors and part of the garrison thought to be "untrustworthy" have been ordered to distant points, while the families of Kronstadt sailors living in Petrograd are held as hostages. The Committee of Defence notified Kronstadt that "the prisoners are kept as 'pledges' for the safety of the Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, N. N. Kuzmin, the Chairman of the Kronstadt Soviet, T. Vassiliev, and other Communists. If the least harm be suffered by our comrades, the hostages will pay with their lives".

"We want no bloodshed," Kronstadt wired in reply. "Not a single Communist has been harmed by us."

The Petrograd workers are anxiously awaiting developments. They hope that the intercession of the sailors may turn the situation in their favour. The term of office of the Kronstadt Soviet is about to expire, and arrangements are being made for the coming elections.

On March 2 a conference of delegates took place, at which 300 representatives of the ships, the garrison, the labour unions and factories were present, among them also a number of Communists. The Conference approved the Resolution passed by the mass meeting the previous day. Lenin and Trotsky have declared it counter-revolutionary and proof of a White conspiracy.

RESOLUTION OF THE GENERAL MEETING
OF THE CREWS OF THE FIRST AND
SECOND SQUADRONS OF THE
BALTIC FLEET

Held March 1, 1921

Having heard the report of the representatives sent by the General Meeting of Ship Crews to Petrograd to investigate the situation there. Resolved:

1. In view of the fact that the present Soviets do not express the will of the workers and peasants, immediately to hold new

elections by secret ballot, the pre-election campaign to have full freedom of agitation among the workers and peasants;

2. To establish freedom of speech and press for workers and peasants, for anarchists and Left socialist parties;

3. To secure freedom of assembly for labour unions and peasant organizations;

4. To call a non-partisan conference of the workers, Red Army soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt, and of Petrograd Province, no later than March 19, 1921;

5. To liberate all political prisoners of socialist parties, as well as all workers, peasants, soldiers, and sailors imprisoned in connection with the labour and peasant movements;

6. To elect a commission to review the cases of those held in prison and concentration camps;

7. To abolish all *politodeli* (political bureaus) because no party should be given special privileges in the propagation of its ideas or receive the financial support of the Government for such purposes. Instead there should be established educational and cultural commissions, locally elected and financed by the Government.

8. To abolish immediately all *zagruditelniye otryadi* (Armed units organized by the Bolsheviks for the purpose of suppressing traffic and confiscating foodstuffs and other products. The irresponsibility and arbitrariness of their methods were proverbial throughout the country).

9. To equalize the rations of all who work, with the exception of those employed in trades detrimental to health;

10. To abolish the Communist fighting detachments in all branches of the Army, as well as the Communist guards kept on duty in mills and factories. Should such guards or military detachments be found necessary, they are to be appointed in the Army from the ranks, and in the factories according to the judgment of the workers;

11. To give the peasants full freedom of action in regard to their land, and also the right to keep cattle, on condition that the peasants manage with their own means; that is, without employing hired labour;

12. To request all branches of the Army, as well as our comrades, the military *kursanti*, to concur in our resolutions;

13. To demand for the latter publicity in the press;

14. To appoint a Travelling Commission of Control;

15. To permit free *kustarnoye* (individual small-scale) production by one's own efforts.

Resolution passed unanimously by Brigade Meeting, two persons refraining from voting.

PETRICHENKO, *Chairman Brigade Meeting.*

PEREPELKIN, *Secretary.*

Resolution passed by an overwhelming majority of the Kron-



stadt garrison.

VASSILIEV, Chairman.

Kalinin and Vassiliev voted against the Resolution.

March 4—Late at night. The extraordinary session of the Petro-Soviet in the Tauride Palace was packed with Communists, mostly youngsters, fanatical and intolerant. Admission by special ticket; a *propusk* (permit) also had to be secured to return home after interdicted hours. Representatives of shops and labour committees were in the galleries, the seats in the main body having been occupied by Communists. Some factory delegates were given the floor, but the moment they attempted to state their case, they were shouted down. Zinoviev repeatedly urged the meeting to give the opposition an opportunity to be heard, but his appeal lacked energy and conviction.

Not a voice was raised in favour of the Constituent Assembly. A millworker pleaded with the Government to consider the complaints of the workers who are cold and hungry. Zinoviev replied that the strikers are enemies of the Soviet regime. Kalinin declared Kronstadt the headquarters of General Kozlovsky's plot. A sailor reminded Zinoviev of the time when he and Lenin were hunted as counter-

revolutionists by Kerensky and were saved by the very sailors whom they now denounce as traitors. Kronstadt demands only honest elections, he declared. He was not allowed to proceed. The stentorian voice and impassioned appeal of Yevdakimov, Zinoviev's lieutenant, wrought the Communists up to a high pitch of excitement. His resolution was passed amid a tumult of protest from the non-partisan delegates and labour men. The resolution declared Kronstadt guilty of a counter-revolutionary attempt against the Soviet regime and demands its immediate surrender. It is a declaration of war.

March 5—Many Bolsheviki refuse to believe that the Soviet resolution will be carried out. It were too monstrous a thing to attack by force of arms the "pride and glory of the Russian Revolution", as Trotsky christened the Kronstadt sailors. In the circle of their friends many Communists threaten to resign from the Party should such a bloody deed come to pass.

Trotsky was to address the Petro-Soviet last evening. His failure to appear was interpreted as indicating that the seriousness of the situation has been exaggerated. But during the night he arrived, and today he issued an ultimatum to Kronstadt:

The Workers' and Peasants' Government has decreed that Kronstadt and the rebellious ships must immediately submit to the authority of the Soviet Republic. Therefore, I command all who have raised their hand against the socialist fatherland to lay down their arms at once. The obdurate are to be disarmed and turned over to the Soviet authorities. The arrested commissars and other representatives of the Government are to be liberated at once. Only those surrendering unconditionally may count on the mercy of the Soviet Republic.

Simultaneously I am issuing orders to prepare to quell the mutiny and subdue the mutineers by force of arms. Responsibility for the harm that may be suffered by the peaceful population will fall entirely upon the heads of the counter-revolutionary mutineers.

This warning is final.

TROTSKY.

*Chairman Revolutionary Military
Soviet of the Republic.*

KAMENEV.

Commander-in-Chief.

The city is on the verge of panic. The factories are closed, and there are rumours of demonstrations and riots. Threats against Jews are becoming audible. Military forces continue to flow into Petrograd and environs. Trotsky has sent another demand to Kronstadt to surrender, the order containing the threat: "I'll shoot you like pheasants." Even some Communists are indignant at the tone assumed by the Government. It is a fatal error, they say, to interpret the workers' plea for bread as opposition. Kronstadt's sympathy with the strikers and their demand for honest elections have been turned by Zinoviev into a counter-revolutionary plot. I have talked the situation

over with several friends, among them a number of Communists. We feel there is yet time to save the situation. A commission in which the sailors and workers would have confidence, could allay the roused passions and find a satisfactory solution of the pressing problems. It is incredible that a comparatively unimportant incident, as the original strike in the Trubotchny mill, should be deliberately provoked into civil war with all the bloodshed it entails.

The Communists with whom I have discussed the suggestion all favour it, but dare not take the initiative. No one believes in the Kozlovsky story. All agree that the sailors are the staunchest supporters of the Soviets; their object is to compel the authorities to grant needed reforms. To a certain degree they have already succeeded. The *zagraditelniye otryadi*, notoriously brutal and arbitrary, have been abolished in the Petrograd province, and certain labour organizations have been given permission to send representatives to the villages for the purchase of food. During the last two days special rations and clothing have also been issued to several factories. The Government fears a general uprising. Petrograd is now in an "extraordinary state of siege": being out of doors is permitted only till nine in the evening. But the city is quiet. I expect no serious upheaval if the authorities can be prevailed upon to take a more reasonable and just course. In the hope of opening the road to a peaceful solution, I have submitted to Zinoviev a plan of arbitration signed by persons friendly to the Bolsheviks:

To the Petrograd Soviet of Labour and Defence.

CHAIRMAN ZINOVIEV:

To remain silent now is impossible, even criminal. Recent events impel us anarchists to speak out and to declare our attitude in the present situation.

The spirit of ferment manifest among the workers and sailors is the result of causes that demand our serious attention. Cold and hunger had produced discontent, and the absence of any opportunity for discussion and criticism is forcing the workers and sailors to air their grievances in the open.

White-Guardist bands wish and may try to exploit this dissatisfaction in their own class interests. Hiding behind the workers and sailors they throw out slogans of the Constituent Assembly, of free trade, and similar demands.

We anarchists have long exposed the fiction of these slogans, and we declare to the whole world that we will fight with arms against any counter-revolutionary attempt, in co-operation with all friends of the Social Revolution and hand in hand with the Bolsheviks.

Concerning the conflict between the Soviet Government and the workers and sailors, we hold that it must be settled not by force of arms, but by means of comradely agreement. Resorting to bloodshed, on the part of the Soviet Government, will not—in the given situation—intimidate or quieten the workers. On the contrary, it will serve only to aggravate matters and will strengthen

the hands of the Entente and of internal counter-revolution.

More important still, the use of force by the Workers' and Peasants' Government against workers and sailors will have a demoralizing effect upon the international revolutionary movement and will result in incalculable harm to the Social Revolution.

Comrades Bolsheviks, bethink yourselves before it is too late! Do not play with fire: you are about to take a most serious and decisive step.

We hereby submit to you the following proposition: Let a commission be selected to consist of five persons, inclusive of two anarchists. The commission is to go to Kronstadt to settle the dispute by peaceful means. In the given situation this is the most radical method. It will be of international revolutionary significance.

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

EMMA GOLDMAN

PERKUS

PETROVSKY

Petrograd, March 5, 1921.

March 6—Today Kronstadt sent out by radio a statement of its position. It reads:

Our cause is just, we stand for the power of Soviets, not parties. We stand for freely elected representatives of the labouring masses. The substitute Soviets manipulated by the Communist Party have always been deaf to our needs and demands; the only reply we have ever received was shooting. . . . Comrades! They deliberately pervert the truth and resort to most despicable defamation. . . . In Kronstadt the whole power is exclusively in the hands of the revolutionary sailors, soldiers, and workers—not with counter-revolutionists led by some Kozlovsky, as the lying Moscow radio tries to make you believe. . . . Do not delay, Comrades! Join us, get in touch with us: demand admission to Kronstadt for your delegates. Only they will tell you the whole truth and will expose the fiendish calumny about Finnish bread and Entente offers.

Long live the revolutionary proletariat and the peasantry!

Long live the power of freely elected Soviets.

March 7—Distant rumbling reaches my ears as I cross the Nevsky. It sounds again, stronger and nearer, as if rolling toward me. All at once I realize that artillery is being fired. It is 6 P.M. Kronstadt has been attacked!

Days of anguish and cannonading. My heart is numb with despair; something has died within me. The people on the streets look bowed with grief, bewildered. No one trusts himself to speak. The thunder of heavy guns rends the air.

March 17—Kronstadt has fallen today.

Thousands of sailors and workers lie dead in its streets. Summary execution of prisoners and hostages continues.

March 18—The victors are celebrating the anniversary of the Commune of 1871. Trotsky and Zinoviev denounce Thiers and Gallifet for the slaughter of the Paris rebels. . . .

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